(b) The exact number of women beedi workers who have been issued identity cards is not readily available. Enforcement of the provision regarding maternity benefits in the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 is the responsibility of the State Governments.

(c) Supreme Court had given a judgement in September, 1985 upholding the coverage of beedi industry under the Employees Provident Fund Act. Since then, Employees Provident Fund Organisation is taking steps to enforce the provisions of the Employees Provident Fund Act in the beedi industry. The information regarding the number of beedi workers who have received provident Fund, is not available.

(d) Yes, Sir. Under the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act 1966 the definition of the term "employees" is very wide and it covers contract workers as well as any person not employed by an employer or a contractor but working with the permission of or under agreement with, the employer or contractor. State Governments who are responsible for the enforcement of this Act are advised from time to time to strictly enforce the Act.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) No Beedi Workers' cooperatives have been promoted by Labour Ministry.

Spices Development Board

†1942. SHRI VALAMPURI JOHN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have a proposal under their consideration to set up a Spices Development Board; and

(b) if so, whether Tamil Nadu has also been chosen as a member State for spices development?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BRAHM DUTT): (a) and (b) Parliament has enacted the Spices Board Act 1986 for promotion of exports of various spices from the country. The Spices Board would be constituted under the provisions of this Act. The Board will have, among others, three members to represent major spice producing States.

Representation from the All India Carpet Manufacturers' Association

1943. SHRIMATI SUDHA VIJAY JOSHI: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the All India Carpet Manufacturers' Association has made a representation to Government that India hand-made carpet industry's export effort is seriously handicapped due to lower prices offered by other exporting countries like China, Pakistan, Iran, etc; and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take to help the hand-made carpet industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) To increase the competitiveness of Indian handknotted carpets in the international market, the following steps have been taken:

(1) The scheme of duty free import of wool against REP has been liberalised.

(2) Duty on import of wool has been reduced from 40 per cent to 20 per cent with effect from 1st March, 1986.

†Previously Unstarred Question 1698, transferred from the 8th August, 1986.